

The portrayal of asian males in d. w. griffiths broken blossoms

Literature



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In Broken Blossoms, the Asian male is not only portrayed as being weaker than the Anglo Saxon male, but he also must be punished for transgressing cultural boundaries by falling in love with a white woman.

At the beginning of the film, the Yellow Man is seen sitting against a wall, depressed, and hugging himself. Already, the film is portraying him as mentally inferior to the white man by having him in a feminized position, since it is culturally understood that the woman becomes sad and depressed, not the male. The Yellow Man is also shown to be an opium smoking drug-addicted gambler, again feeding into the Anglo Saxon stereotype of the Asian male as depraved and morally suspect. Then we meet the white male, Battling Burrow, who is a literal symbol of the raw strength of the Anglo-Saxon male. The contrast between the two males is startling; the Asian male is morally corrupt and feminized while the Anglo Saxon male is a physical powerhouse of raw brute strength.

When the white female, Lucy, goes shopping and stops before the Yellow Man's store, he becomes infatuated with her and begins to follow her around town. This is the biggest threat to the white patriarchal society; having an inferior male mating with a white woman. When Lucy comes home, she is beaten by her father for serving his tea late, but the symbolic message is that she must be punished for attracting the attention of the Yellow Man. The Yellow Man takes Lucy into his apartment to nurse her after her beating. The Yellow Man is further feminized in the eyes of the audience by participating in the female practice of nursing and by showering Lucy with flowers and silk.